

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method, implemented using a computer system, of managing delivery carriers, comprising:
  - receiving a first set of delivery data from a first mail processors processor and a second set of delivery data from a second mail processor;
  - determining, using the computer system, routes for delivery based on a first set of business rules applied to the first set of delivery data and a second set of business rules applied to the second set of delivery data, ~~wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation~~;
  - assigning, using the computer system, mail items to delivery carriers based on the determined routes;
  - transmitting, using the computer system, mail item assignment information to the first mail processors processor and the second mail processor;
  - monitoring the determined routes, wherein monitoring includes:
    - receiving update information from the delivery carriers while the mail items are being delivered on the determined routes, wherein the update information relates to at least one of the routes for delivery and a capacity of the delivery carriers;
    - and
  - dynamically reassigning the mail items to different delivery carriers based on the update information received from the delivery carriers during monitoring.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining routes includes processing active, planned, and closed routes.
3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the first set of business rules ~~further~~ comprise cost consideration information.
4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein cost consideration information includes overriding a lower cost option due to ~~[[the]]~~ a carrier contract obligation.
5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein cost consideration information includes determining a lowest cost for service window.
6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein cost considerations information includes delivery option information.
7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein delivery option information includes evaluating data regarding a combination of at least one aircraft, at least one train, at least one motor vehicle, or at least one ship, as a means of transporting the mail items.
8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the first set of business rules further comprise using route delay information.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein using route delay information further includes receiving weather information.
10. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein using route delay information further includes receiving route closing information from the delivery carriers.
11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising creating an assignment manifest.
12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein creating the assignment manifest includes generating one of a hardcopy and an electronic copy of the assignment manifest.
13. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising transmitting the assignment manifest to at least one delivery carrier.
14. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising tracking deliveries of the mail items using performance management tools.
15. (Currently Amended) A system for managing delivery carriers, comprising:  
  
means for receiving a first set of delivery data from a first mail processors processor and a second set of delivery data from a second mail processor;  
  
means for determining routes for delivery based on a first set of business rules applied to the first set of delivery data and a second set of business rules applied to the second set of delivery data, wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation;

means for assigning mail items to delivery carriers based on the determined routes;

means for transmitting mail item assignment information to the first mail processors processor and the second mail processor;

means for monitoring the determined routes, wherein monitoring includes:

receiving update information from the delivery carriers while the mail items are being delivered on the determined routes, wherein the update information relates to at least one of the routes for delivery and a capacity of the delivery carriers;

and

means for dynamically reassigning the mail items to different delivery carriers based on the update information received from the delivery carriers during monitoring.

16. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the means for determining routes includes means for processing active, planned, and closed routes.
17. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15, wherein the first set of business rules further comprise cost consideration information.
18. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 17, wherein cost consideration information includes overriding a lower cost option due to [[the]] a carrier contract obligation.
19. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the cost consideration information further includes determining a lowest cost for service window.

20. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 17, wherein the cost consideration information includes delivery option information.
21. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 20, wherein the delivery option information includes evaluating data regarding a combination of at least one aircraft, at least one train, at least one motor vehicle, or at least one ship, for transporting the mail items.
22. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 17, wherein the first set of business rules further comprise route delay information.
23. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 22, wherein the route delay information further includes overriding a route choice after receiving weather information.
24. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 22, wherein the route delay information further includes overriding a route choice after receiving route closing information from the delivery carriers.
25. (Original) The system of claim 15, further comprising means for creating an assignment manifest.
26. (Original) The system of claim 25, wherein the means for creating the assignment manifest includes means for generating one of a hardcopy and an electronic copy of the assignment manifest.

27. (Original) The system of claim 26, further comprising means for transmitting the assignment manifest to at least one delivery carrier.
28. (Original) The system of claim 15, further comprising means for tracking deliveries of the mail items.
29. (Currently Amended) A solid computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing stages, comprising:
  - receiving a first set of delivery data from a first mail processors processor and a second set of delivery data from a second mail processor;
  - determining routes for delivery based on a first set of business rules applied to the first set of delivery data and a second set of business rules applied to the second set of delivery data, wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation;
  - assigning mail items to delivery carriers based on the determined routes;
  - transmitting mail item assignment information to the first mail processors processor and the second mail processor;
  - monitoring the determined routes, wherein monitoring includes:
    - receiving update information from the delivery carriers while the mail items are being delivered on the determined routes, wherein the update information relates to at least one of the routes for delivery and a capacity of the delivery carriers;
    - and
  - dynamically reassigning the mail items to different delivery carriers based on the update information received from the delivery carriers during monitoring.

30. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, wherein determining routes includes processing active, planned, and closed routes.
31. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, wherein the first set of business rules further comprise using cost consideration information.
32. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein using cost consideration information includes overriding a lower cost option due to [[the]] a carrier contract obligation.
33. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein using cost consideration information includes determining a lowest cost for service window.
34. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein using cost consideration information includes using delivery option information.
35. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 34, wherein using delivery option information includes evaluating data regarding a combination of at least one aircraft, at least one train, at least one motor vehicle, or at least one ship, as a means of transporting the mail items.
36. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the first set of business rules further comprise using route delay information.
37. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 36, wherein using route delay information further includes receiving weather information.

38. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 36, wherein using route delay information further includes receiving route closing information from the delivery carriers.
39. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, further comprising computer-executable instructions for creating an assignment manifest.
40. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 39, wherein creating the assignment manifest includes generating one of a hardcopy and an electronic copy of the assignment manifest.
41. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 40, further comprising computer-executable instructions for transmitting the assignment manifest to at least one delivery carrier.
42. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, further comprising computer-executable instructions for tracking deliveries of the mail items.
43. (Currently Amended) A system for managing delivery carriers, comprising:
  - at least one server containing a mail assignment engine, the mail assignment engine operative to:
    - receive a first set of delivery data from a first mail processors processor and a second set of delivery data from a second mail processor;
    - determine routes for delivery based on a first set of business rules applied to the first set of delivery data and a

second set of business rules applied to the second set of delivery data, wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation;  
assign mail items to carriers based on the determined routes;  
transmit mail item assignment information to the first mail processors processor and the second mail processor;  
monitor the determined routes, wherein monitoring includes:  
receiving update information from the delivery carriers while the mail items are being delivered on the predetermined routes, wherein the update information relates to at least one of the routes for delivery and a capacity of the delivery carriers; and  
dynamically reassign the mail items to different delivery carriers based on the update information received from the delivery carriers during monitoring.

44. (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein a transaction concentrator is used to manage communications for the at least one server.
45. (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein the mail assignment engine determines the routes using a database including files for active, planned, and closed routes.
46. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the first set of business rules further comprise cost consideration information.

47. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the cost consideration information includes overriding a lower cost option due to ~~[[the]]~~ a carrier contract obligation.
48. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the cost consideration information includes a lowest cost for service window.
49. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 46, wherein the cost consideration information includes delivery option information.
50. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 49, wherein the delivery option information includes information for evaluating data regarding a combination of at least one aircraft, at least one train, at least one motor vehicle, or at least one ship.
51. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 46, wherein the first set of business rules further comprise route delay information.
52. (Original) The system of claim 51, wherein the route delay information further includes weather information.
53. (Original) The system of claim 51, wherein the route delay information further includes route closing information received from the delivery carriers.
54. (Original) The system of claim 43, wherein the mail assignment engine is further operative to create an assignment manifest.

55. (Original) The system of claim 54, wherein the assignment manifest is one of a hardcopy and an electronic file for delivery to at least one of the delivery carriers.
56. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, further comprising performance management tools for tracking deliveries of the mail items.
57. (Currently Amended) A computer system for tagging mail items, comprising:  
[[and]]  

a first computer for executing a first software component, the first software component including computer-executable instructions for:

receiving a first set of delivery data;

transmitting the first set of delivery data to a mail item assignment system;

receiving [[an]] mail item assignment data file containing information ~~regarding assignment of mail items~~ from the mail item assignment system after the mail item assignment system assigns [[the]] a first set of mail items to a delivery carrier and an associated delivery route, wherein the assignment is based on a first set of business rules applied to the first set of delivery data and ~~wherein the business rules comprise a carrier contract obligation~~;

receiving information indicating reassignment of the first set of mail items after the mail item assignment system dynamically reassigns the first set of mail items to a different delivery carrier based on monitoring the delivery route after the first set of mail items are

assigned to the delivery route, wherein monitoring includes receiving update information from the previously assigned delivery carrier while the first set of mail items are being delivered on the assigned delivery route, the update information including information concerning at least one of a previously assigned delivery route and a capacity of the previously assigned delivery carrier; and

printing labels containing mail item routing information[[.]]:  
and

a second computer for executing a second software component, the second software component including computer-executable instructions for:

receiving a second set of delivery data;  
transmitting the second set of delivery data to the mail item assignment system;

receiving mail item assignment information from the mail item assignment system after the mail item assignment system assigns a second set of mail items to a delivery carrier and an associated delivery route, wherein the assignment is based on a second set of business rules applied to the second set of delivery data;

receiving information indicating reassignment of the second set of mail items after the mail item assignment system dynamically reassigns the second set of mail items to a different delivery carrier based on monitoring the delivery route after the second set of mail items are assigned to the delivery route, wherein

monitoring includes receiving update information from the previously assigned delivery carrier while the second set of mail items are being delivered on the assigned delivery route, the update information including information concerning at least one of a previously assigned delivery route and a capacity of the previously assigned delivery carrier; and

printing labels containing mail item routing information.

58. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
  - measuring the performance of the delivery carriers; and
  - adjusting at least one business rule based on the measured performance information.
59. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, further comprising:
  - means for measuring the performance of the delivery carriers; and
  - means for adjusting at least one business rule based on the measured performance information.
60. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 29, further comprising:
  - measuring the performance of the delivery carriers; and
  - instructions for performing a stage comprising adjusting at least one business rule based on the measured performance information.
61. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, wherein the mail assignment engine is operative to:

receive performance measurements of carriers; and  
adjust at least one business rule based on the performance  
measurements.